

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 EA-06 IO-04 ISO-00 SWF-01 AID-05 CEA-01

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USNATO

USMISSION OECD PARIS

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB, ILO, ETUC

SUBJECT: KERSTEN INCENSED BY AFL-CIO CHARGE OF ICFTU COLLUSION
WITH COMMUNISTS AT THE ILO

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1. SUMMARY. ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY KERSTEN HAS EXPRESSED

"PROFOUND SHOCK AND ANGER" WITH AN ARTICLE APPEARING IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF THE AFL-CIO'S FREE TRADE UNION NEWS WHICH ACCUSED THE ICFTU OF "MOVING EVER CLOSER TO COOPERATION AND CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMUNIST WFTU AT THE ILO." KERSTEN LABELED THE CHARGE A "FALSE AND UNWARRANTED ATTACK ON THE ICFTU" WHICH HE INTENDS TO TAKE UP AT THE ICFTU GROUP MEETING IN GENEVA ON NOVEMBER 8.
END SUMMARY.

2. ON OCTOBER 25, AN INFURIATED OTTO KERSTEN CALLED THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE TO EXPRESS HIS INDIGNATION OVER AN ARTICLE APPEARING IN THE FREE TRADE UNION NEWS WHICH ACCUSED THE ICFTU OF COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNISTS AT THE ILO. THE ARTICLE, ENTITLED "THE ILO'S ROCKY ROAD," WAS WRITTEN BY THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE AFL-CIO'S INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT BOGGS AND STATED THAT THE STACKING OF THE ILO RESOLUTION COMMITTEE WITH SOVIET SYMPATHIZERS WAS "FACILITATED BY THE ICFTU'S ABROGATION OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO COORDINATE ITS AFFILIATES' PARTICIPATION IN THE ILO CONFERENCE." THE ARTICLE FURTHER STATED THAT THE TRADITIONAL GROUPING OF WESTERN DEMOCRATIC FORCES IS DIMINISHING IN THE FACE OF THE NEW ILO MAJORITY OF COMMUNIST NATIONS AND THAT THIS NEW REALITY "HAS DISCOURAGED THE ICFTU AND ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES FROM DOING ANYTHING TO COUNTER THE UNDEMOCRATIC THRUSTS OF THIS NEW AND POWERFUL ALLIANCE IN THE ILO."

3. KERSTEN BRANDED THE AFL-CIO ATTACK ON THE ICFTU AS A FALSEHOOD AND COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IN TERMS OF UNITING DEMOCRATIC FORCES AT THE ILO. HE SAID HE WILL PROTEST THE AFL-CIO'S ACTION AT THE NOVEMBER 8 ICFTU GROUP MEETING IN GENEVA WHICH IS USUALLY ATTENDED BY AFL-CIO REPRESENTATIVES.

4. KERSTEN TOLD US THAT HE WAS PARTICULARLY UPSET BY THE ARTICLE BECAUSE ITS PUBLICATION FOLLOWED ON THE HEELS OF HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON EARLIER THIS MONTH WHERE HE CLAIMS TO HAVE PUBLICLY COMMENTED ON THE "POSITIVE" ROLE PLAYED BY THE ICFTU AT THE ILO IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESENCE OF AFL-CIO PRESIDENT GEORGE MEANY.
KERSTEN SEEMED MOST AGITATED BY THE INTIMATION IN THE ARTICLE OF ICFTU COLLUSION WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN THE RESOLUTION CONDEMNING ISRAEL AND IN THE FORGING OF AN AGREEMENT TO PUT THE QUESTION OF PLO ADMISSION TO THE ILO GOVERNING BODY. KERSTEN SAID THAT THIS WAS INDEED STRANGE IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT AN ISRAELI DELEGATION HAD OFFICIALLY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION TO THE ICFTU FOR

ITS CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI QUESTION AT THE ILO CONFERENCE LAST JUNE.

5. MISSION LABOR ATTACHE CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER ICFTU OFFICIALS SINCE KERSTEN'S TELEPHONE CALL INDICATE THAT KERSTEN'S REACTION TO THE BOGGS ARTICLE REFLECTS A GENERAL FEELING OF DEEP RESENTMENT IN THE ICFTU HIERARCHY. THEY ATTACH PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE TO THE FACT THAT THE ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY BOGGS IN HIS CAPACITY AS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE AFL-CIO'S INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT. THEY CLAIM THAT THIS GIVES THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE ICFTU "OFFICIAL STATUS" IN TERMS OF AFL-CIO POLICY.

6. COMMENT: THE DIMINISHING NUMBER OF EUROPEAN TRADE UNION LEADERS WHO STILL ADVOCATE THE AFL-CIO'S RETURN TO THE ICFTU WILL FIND LITTLE COMFORT IN THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT. IN FACT, THEIR WANING HOPES SEEM ALL BUT LOST IN THE WIDENING GAP BETWEEN THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS ON THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF DETENTE. A VAST MAJORITY OF WEST EUROPEAN TRADE UNION LEADERS ARE CONSCIOUSLY PURSUING A COURSE AIMED AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSER EAST-WEST RELATIONS; THE THREAT POSED BY THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE COMMUNIST AND THIRD WORLD ALLIANCE AT THE ILO AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORA IS NOT APT TO SWAY THEM FROM THAT COURSE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE AFL-CIO'S WARNINGS AGAINST THE POTENTIAL PITFALLS, DESPITE THEIR LEGITIMACY, ARE GENERALLY VIEWED BY THE WEST EUROPEANS AS THE RASPIINGS OF COLD WAR WARRIORS FROM ANOTHER AGE AND TIME. GREENWALD

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